

West Jordan Middle School 7550 South 1700 West West Jordan, Utah 84084

November 15-16, 2006



Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

West Jordan Middle School 7550 South 1700 West West Jordan, Utah 84084

November 15-16, 2006

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, November 15-16, 2006, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of West Jordan Middle School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Joanne Mattes is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at West Jordan Middle School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at West Jordan Middle School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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WEST JORDAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Joanne Mattes	Principal
Travis Hamblin	Assistant Principal
	Assistant Principal

Counseling

Colleen Dixon	
Jaci Turner	
Martin Uresti	Psychologist

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Amanda McMurray
Lisa Morey
Alan Nakagama

Toi Nielson Katie Palfreyman Sulynn Peterson Karen Preece Christian Rauch Rawlen Rawlins Rick Saunders Paula Sweeny Randall White Jenny Witzel Kirk Zander

WEST JORDAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of West Jordan Middle School is to advance each student's academic and personal development.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- All students can learn.
- Students learn best in a physically and emotionally safe environment
- Learning is a collaborative effort among parents, teachers, students, and the community.
- Problem solving and critical thinking skills foster life-long learning.
- Curriculum that is engaging and relevant has a lasting impact.
- Students who communicate in effective and appropriate ways are empowered to be successful.
- Students need to be able to adapt to and ever-changing world.
- Students should become socially conscious individuals who demonstrate respect and responsibility to self, others, and their environment.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Craig Jessop, Rocky Mountain Junior High, Weber School District, Visiting Team Chair

Barry Jones, South Ogden Junior High, Weber School District
Mary Basso, Bonneville Junior High School, Granite School District
Willa Jamieson, Eisenhower Junior High, Granite School District
Linda James, Scott M. Matheson Junior High, Granite School District
Vickie Bona, Scott M. Matheson Junior High, Granite School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

WEST JORDAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

West Jordan Middle School opened in 1958 as West Jordan Junior High. Over the years the community and school population have grown, the mascot was changed from the Shamrocks to the Lions, and the entire philosophy of the school has changed from that of a mini high school to the philosophy of an elevated elementary school. As part of the middle school philosophy, West Jordan Middle School has moved to a teaming concept that involves all 7th and 8th grade students. When teachers meet to collaborate, they do so not only by grade level, but also by academic team.

West Jordan Middle School has programs in place to assist students who are struggling. Through their desire to embrace teaming, collaboration, and the middle school philosophy, West Jordan has become a leader in Jordan School District's commitment to the middle school philosophy.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

The school profile of CRT results reveals increases in the Pre-Algebra CRT scores; a decline in Algebra scores; language arts scores are also generally up; Biology scores are very strong; Earth Systems and 8th grade scores have remained stable; 7th grade scores have improved by 16% over the previous year.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

The school profile is very complete; however, disaggregating of testing results would help the school determine which groups of students may need extra help in math, English, and science.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

• Effects of diversity on school climate, academic progress, and behavior in the school.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

The school has taken a deep look into itself and has documented a tremendous amount of data, especially in terms of testing and test results. This study appears to have been conducted school-wide, by stakeholders within the school. Community members were less involved, even though the community was invited by the school leadership to become more involved.

b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

West Jordan Middle School has many strengths. These are portrayed well within the report. The Visiting Team did not find evidence of data that led to the development of the DRSLs. These appear to come from perceived weaknesses.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

West Jordan Middle School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

It is the goal of West Jordan Middle School community to assist each student in becoming:

- 1. An Active Reader
- 2. An Effective Communicator
- 3. A Resourceful Thinker
- 4. A Technologically-Literate Individual
- 5. A Responsible Citizen
- 6. A Life-Long Learner

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?

Prior to commencing the accreditation process, West Jordan Middle School staff had already been involved in creating a shared vision and defining the beliefs and mission of the school as part of middle level reform. This original vision was created through a consensus of the teaching staff. Afterward, the mission statement, belief statements, and DRSLs were revisited and fine-tuned through focus groups during the accreditation process, which did involve stakeholders within the school community. These beliefs were then presented to the community in various innovative ways, such as a PowerPoint presentation prior to the choir and orchestra concerts. This shared vision has allowed the staff at West Jordan Middle School to move forward with the creation of ways and means of meeting the needs of the student population.

b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?

The belief statements developed by the staff at West Jordan Middle School demonstrate the community's commitment to the success of its students. The mission statements, beliefs, and DRSLs are integrated throughout the school, and are also exemplified by the faculty, staff, and administration. The mission statement is permanently displayed on the wall above the door to the main office, and the DRSLs are prominently displayed on banners in the main hallway and on posters in the various classrooms. The belief statements are well thought out, insightful, and positive, and provide the foundation for collaboration and teaming. The Visiting Team commends the school for such collaborative efforts.

c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?

The school's DRSLs directly align to the mission and belief statements. These beliefs clearly reflect the community's desire for students to grow into mature, effective, and responsible adults. The DRSLs provide the vehicle through which students can achieve this goal. The Visiting Team recommends that more measurable means be developed to better assess the achievement of the DRSLs by students.

Curriculum Development:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

The faculty and staff at West Jordan Middle School are committed to the process of middle school teaming and collaboration time. Seventh and eighth grade teams are working collaboratively to provide interdisciplinary instruction to students on the teams.

The West Jordan Middle School faculty implements the Utah State Core Curriculum. The Visiting Team agrees with the school's recommendation that the faculty implement instruction based on research-driven practices. The teachers have a shared vision for student learning and implementing a middle level philosophy that is supported by the administration, parents, and community members.

The English and Math Departments are currently engaged in vertical teaming within each department.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

The faculty values and effectively uses collaboration time to design interdisciplinary teaching units. The Visiting Team agrees with the school's recommendation to update the curriculum according to Utah State Core Curriculum. Some teachers are currently using a curriculum map. Curriculum mapping on a school-wide basis may assist in further development of interdisciplinary units across all subjects and grades.

The students are well versed in the DRSLs and their meaning. Seventh grade students, in particular, understand the importance and value the teachers have acknowledged in these DRSLs. Banners in the main halls and posters in the classrooms also focus students' attention on DRSLs. References by English teachers in their lessons plans and instruction clearly identify the DRSLs being addressed in each lesson.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

The professional staff has designed and implemented a variety of learning experiences for students. These learning experiences are designed to meet student needs and accommodate various learning styles. The Visiting Team observed effective classroom management and organizational strategies.

Teachers attend training workshops and many have completed the Mid-level Academy. All teachers have completed a workshop in backward design. Teachers share their best practices with each other in team, grade level, and departmental meetings.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

The professional staff uses a wide variety of instructional strategies to ensure that students have the opportunity to learn, even though their learning styles vary. During the visit, students were engaged in cooperative group activities, question and response, hands-on activities, written tests, activities using technology, student-led activities, and science labs. The Visiting Team observed a variety of instructional strategies that helped most students become engaged in learning. They seemed to be focused on what was happening in the lessons and were actively participating in the instruction regardless of the strategy used.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

Students at West Jordan Middle School have many opportunities to learn material, get assistance, and find success in their learning. After-school programs include the Tutoring Advisory Board (TAB), a tutoring program from the University of Utah; the Youth Advisory Board (YAB), a leadership experience from the University of Utah; Lion Watch, targeting and tracking at-risk students: MESA; Math Counts; Reality Town; and the Wild Card tracking program. Staff members make themselves available before and after school to help students with assignments.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

It is clear to the Visiting Team that the school is using several assessments school-wide in evaluating students' performance. The CRTs are being used in the core classes to identify strengths and weaknesses. The school's results on CRTs compared with the rest of the district show weakness in several areas. The school average is at 18.7, compared with the district's level of 21.3. The school recognizes the need to improve, and has based two of the five action plans' goals on increasing the percentage of students moving from minimal mastery (level I) to a higher level.

The Visiting Team commends the school for recognizing the need to move a greater number of students to a higher number on the CRTs. The Visiting Team would recommend, however, that the school set goals that are more specific in terms of what percentage of students will move to the next level of performance.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

There is strong evidence to support the idea that this staff has developed an understanding of and appreciation for the importance of using multiple assessments in evaluating student performance. The Visiting Team saw several assessment systems in place at the school, such as student journals, group projects, research projects, term papers, oral presentations, open-ended questions, tests, quizzes, surveys, and performance task projects.

The teachers in the collaborative process do a wonderful job of sharing ideas on what is working in their disciplines. The Visiting Team commends the school in the process of assessment.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

School-wide, the staff is using assessment tools to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of students. The assessments that are in place are fair and equitable. The Visiting Team recognizes that the staff is utilizing multiple assessments to help students succeed in the educational process. The assessments are in place, and the staff is continuing to utilize the results from the assessment process.

Leadership for School Improvement:

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?

The school leadership at West Jordan Middle School has promoted and continues to promote teaming at the school. While this is emphasized in Jordan School District, the privilege of having time during school hours to collaborate with other team members in the academic and grade-level teams has to be earned. West Jordan Middle School has earned that privilege by giving time for approximately five years. The leadership and faculty have worked diligently to plan and prepare ways to help students be successful. Teams have autonomy to carry out their plans and do so for the benefit of their students.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?

The Visiting Team observed large quantities of data that the school has gathered with regard to the students and student progress. Comparisons of yearly national and state testing are readily available to teachers and teams. Decisions are made by the administration, and by team leaders and members, that will benefit the students. Teaming following the middle school concept is well documented. West Jordan Middle School has followed that research-based practice and continues to refine its practices. School leadership has led out in the teaming process and encourages teachers and teams to be innovative and progressive. Collaboration

plays a key role in the success of West Jordan Middle School. Grade-level teams and academic teams collaborate regularly.

c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?

The school leadership monitors student achievement through national and state-mandated testing, as well as the testing and assessment that happens in the different teams. One member of the leadership team is assigned to collect data and organize it for the school. The members of the leadership team appear to reflect with each other on school issues, which would include student progress and evaluation scores.

d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

The school leadership consistently promotes programs and encourages innovations that lead to improved academics, greater collaboration, and more opportunities for all students to get a good education. The implementation of teaming is exemplary. Teachers have followed the examples set by the leadership and have fully accepted the teaming concept.

The leadership has sought to promote involvement by the community at large, though many parents have chosen not to become as involved as they could or should be.

Most students feel safe at school, but some stated they would not cross a Hispanic student because they felt they would then have to "take them all on."

e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

All of the information and feedback the Visiting Team was able to gather indicates that the school leadership responsibly allocates resources for use by the staff to continue current programs and improve in areas of emphasis as outlined by the school's improvement plan and DRSLs. Teachers feel they have access to funds to aid their continued growth and to assist in their endeavors.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

The Visiting Team noted that there is an aura of cooperation and collaboration that seems to exude from all that the staff undertakes. The academic teams, as well as the grade-level teams (grades 7 and 8), earnestly strive to work together for the benefit of the students of the school. When they talk about students, it is not to swap stories about how unruly students may have become, but rather to seek for answers on how best to work with a student who is struggling in his or her classes. These teams are not only encouraged by the school leadership, they are expected and joined by the leadership.

Community Building:

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

West Jordan Middle School projects an image of school-wide community building. The sense of community that exists at West Jordan Middle School is admirable. A tremendous number of programs have been designed to help students develop talents and interests. It is clearly evident to the Visiting Team that West Jordan Middle School fosters working relationships inside the school.

Additionally, the school shows interconnectivity between the various factions that make up the school: parental involvement, teacher-student relationships, administrative support of faculty, and involvement in curricular and extracurricular programs. It is impressively evident that all stakeholders not only show concern, but have been proactive in the areas of strengthening and nurturing the developmental processes for students at West Jordan Middle School. The Visiting Team is impressed with the alignment and support the stakeholders show for the departments in the school.

It is evident that the students feel a connection with the staff, administration, and counseling department in the school. Students feel safe and welcome at West Jordan Middle School.

The Visiting Team was very impressed with the cross-curricular instruction that takes place at West Jordan Middle School.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

Evidence exists of networking among the parents, administrators, and staff members. This focus group demonstrated its collaborative networking by its shared efforts, which are verified in the day-to-day operations of the school.

Many activities are held that encourage parents to come to West Jordan Middle School. These include parent/teacher conferences, SEOP conferences, ESL Night,

the annual "Boat Float," and evening concerts involving the choir, band, and orchestra students (to name a few). Parents from the Community Council said they feel very welcome at West Jordan Middle School.

This focus group has worked very hard with its feeder schools to ensure that the incoming 7th grade students know what to expect when they begin school at West Jordan Middle School. Incoming 7th graders are also made aware of extracurricular activities and are encouraged to become involved.

The Visiting Team felt that a school-wide feeling of harmony exists among staff, students and parents involved with West Jordan Middle School. As visitors in the school, the Visiting Team felt very welcome during the visit at West Jordan Middle School.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?

The faculty at West Jordan Middle School is strongly committed to professional development. It is expected that when a teacher attends any professional development, he/she must come back and inservice the remaining faculty at West Jordan Middle School. The Visiting Team acknowledges the dedication to continuous learning and improvement and the effort of teachers toward student success.

The Visiting Team also recognizes the importance of professional development and the desire of teachers to attend professional development, but recommends a more focused approach school-wide.

b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

The faculty effectively uses collaboration time to design interdisciplinary units and support at-risk students. Collaboration time may be revisited and readjusted to include time for focused professional development as identified by faculty.

West Jordan Middle School has implemented positive supports both behaviorally and academically for all students. As a result, the school has seen an increase in test scores. The faculty has gathered data from many sources and is using this data to drive instruction.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, but only by the USOE – it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?

The Visiting Team made two recommendations regarding the action plan designed to move the process forward. The first recommendation is that the school develop measurable goals and the tools to assess the progress toward those goals. The second recommendation is that a more specific timeline for implementation of the action plan rubric be developed.

b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?

The faculty has a firm commitment to the action plan and the accreditation process. They are aware of the progress they have made in the last few years and they enjoy the success they are having with the students, their test scores, and their learning. It is this unwavering commitment that led the Visiting Team to recommend the term of accreditation. The faculty's commitment will bring along others in the system who may not be as committed.

c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?

As stated above, the Visiting Team found a need for articulated goals and the tools to assess progress toward the goals. However, the Visiting Team also believes that this will be a logical step that will be accomplished by the school team.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the administration and staff's commitment and focus on student success.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff for being cohesive and supportive of one another throughout the collaboration and teaming structure.
- The Visiting Team commends the positive focus on student behavior and academic achievement.
- The Visiting Team commends the highly creative and innovative approach of the staff to interdisciplinary instruction.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration of West Jordan Middle School for its vision, leadership, and support of teachers' innovative ideas.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration and staff's continued dedication and commitment to progress toward middle level philosophy.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school identify two or three DRSLs that will receive first action, and concentrate on school-wide professional development on those DRSLs.
- The Visiting Team recommends that, as part of the action plan, the school develop measurable goals and the tools to assess progress toward those goals.
- The Visiting Team recommends that West Jordan Middle School develop a specific timeline for implementation of action plan rubrics.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school work to align its action plan with the DRSLs and rubrics.
- The Visiting Team recommends that all school stakeholders continue emphasis on anti-bullying/building unity among student body.
- The Visiting Team recommends that West Jordan Middle School study ways to provide more a rigorous/challenging curriculum for advanced students in 7th and 8th grades. (Revisit the option of honors classes.)